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AN EDUCATIONAL POLICY FOR SPANISH-AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

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The problem of education for Spanish-America is, first of all, a problem of language. Many people in these countries have a high culture in symbols unfamiliar to the English race. The first business of the American republic, in its attempt to universalize its educational ideals in America, is to give these Spanish-speaking races the symbols of the English language in which to express the knowledge and the culture which they already possess. To this end and for this purpose only a large element of concrete treatment must necessarily enter into the beginnings of any educational policy intended for these people. The purpose of the concrete phase is to give an objective association for the new symbols and thus aid in the rapid acquisition of the English language. The schools should have kindergartens underlying them and manual training departments throughout their grades.

Another matter not to be overlooked is that, while these people are acquiring thus the symbols of a new language, they must not be allowed to neglect the perfecting of their thought in the symbols of their native tongue. It is my contention that children in school will learn two languages in the formative years as rapidly as they will learn one, and each will be the better learned by reason of the mastery of the other. This was demonstrated over and over again in our experience in Porto Rico, and it would be a great injustice to the Spanish-American civilization to undertake to remove the language of their native country, so rich in literature, so glorious in history. But if the trend of life, social, economic and political, is to be from the north to the south in our American continents, they must acquire two languages and we with them must be students of a bi-lingual civilization. A man is as many times a man as he has languages in which to think and with which to express his thought.

Another matter of vital importance arises from the fact that Latin-America has two entirely separate types of people. The highly cultivated cosmopolitan culture of the one group is in striking contrast to the almost absolute lack of knowledge and culture on the part of the major group—the peon. The result of these two diverse groups is that there is no essential democracy of thought such as is common and vital to the American republic. Any educational policy, therefore, that seeks to put the fundamental spirit of democracy into the Latin-American civilization must break the distinctions that prevail between these classes and build up everywhere, out of this larger group, individuals who shall constitute an intermediate civilization running through all the gamut of development from the humblest to the most cultured. Experience has led me to believe that here is the vital secret of the educational propaganda that must eventually prevail. Schools must be established everywhere for all the population. Out of this upper group, finely trained men and women must come to meet with the best of the other group to teach the masses of the children of the illiterate. And so, intermingling as teacher and taught, there will arise inevitably, as the spirit of the school, a democracy of substantial citizenship to whom the franchise may safely be entrusted and from whom, possessed as they are with the fundamental virtues of the race, will come reinforcement and strength to all social, economic and civic advance.

Another principle which must not be overlooked in any attempt to formulate a school policy for the American republic with reference to its neighbors, is the matter of securing an efficient and effective teaching body for the schools. Wide observation and study confirm the judgment that no people has ever risen to commanding influence who did not breed its leaders out of its own life. No amount of imported teaching power can permanently serve the highest interests of a people. The teacher from the United States may for a season, and should, set models of educational method and organization throughout these countries, but their presence should be distinctly understood as a temporary relation to the educational policy of these countries. Normal schools should be established. The most highly cultivated and the most energetic young men and women of these respective countries should be gathered into these

great normal schools and trained in the fine art of teaching the human soul to grow harmoniously.

Japan wisely brought from Europe and America a group of teachers to inspire and to guide and to formulate an educational policy for the empire; but when the Japanese teacher had been trained, and Japanese leadership had been bred, the visitor there from other countries was politely invited to return, and the nation to-day gloriously carries on its reorganized system under native leadership and home-bred teaching.

It is necessary also to remember in this connection that in a community where there is a practical absence of intermediate groups of life, the teacher is likely to be regarded from the wrong social point of view, and such has been the case, at least in some of the South American countries. I am told by the director-general of the higher schools of the Argentine that when, in 1869, Sarmiento de Gamboa assumed the leadership of that mighty people, he discovered among other things the low social estate of the teacher and set himself deliberately to the task of making the teacher, with the priest of the church, a moral as well as an intellectual and social force in the state; and this, I take it, is the need in any policy that is to bring permanent development to this people.

Waiving for the moment the relative significance of the various forces that build on the side of the real qualities of the soul, I am constrained to say that the materials contained in the curriculum of the schools of Spanish-America should be in the elementary grades the materials of the child's environment and in the higher grades the materials that bind together the great countries north and south, the brotherhood of states west of the Atlantic sea.

It seems also a wise provision to arrange for the education of representative groups of teachers from all these various countries in the best schools of the United States, in order that these young teachers may be able to carry back into their life-work the actual processes of education as they are unfolded here in our system of American thought. The coming of these teachers will also give to our people a better insight into the needs and into the conditions attending the development of an educational system throughout Latin-America.

It is my opinion that there should be established somewhere

midway between South and North America (and at the present time undoubtedly in the island of Porto Rico) a great insular school; its faculty made up from the United States and from the South American countries, with its pupils coming from all over the Latin civilization. This school would be a clearing-house of ideas and a central point from which should emanate the finest formulation and expression of the best thought of the trained and experienced minds of the continents. It has long been my feeling that the great institutions of learning in America should in some way combine, and for the sake of the service which they can render to mankind, maintain such an institution of learning. In no other one specific way could these higher institutions of American thought extend their usefulness and endear themselves to the whole American people, and I confidently urge this upon their immediate attention.

Finally, no teacher should go to any new country, with whose social, intellectual and religious ideals he is unfamiliar, without carrying into the work the lofty spirit of a true missionary, which is the spirit of service for others. The teachers who pass to the South, carrying the banners of American thought, must carry in their hearts a warm sympathy and an abiding faith in the goodness of men and in the universal advance of the whole people through education. Unless this spirit dominates the whole enterprise, it is doomed from its beginning.